

THE IMPLICATIONS OF NATIONAL CULTURE ON AMERICAN KNOWLEDGE
WORK TEAMS: A MODEL OF A COLLABORATIVE CORPORATE
CULTURE TO SUPPORT TEAM FUNCTIONING

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In order to remain competitive, many American businesses implement team-based work strategies. In many cases, however, teams fail in American organizations, which may be in part due to a conflict between American culture and the cooperative environment necessary for teams to function effectively. By comparing the literature regarding American culture, challenges faced by teams, and then corporate culture, it becomes evident that there are aspects of American culture that pose challenges but also that an appropriate corporate culture can mediate some areas of incompatibility. A collaborative corporate culture can induce cooperation among employees without asking employees to work in a manner that is counterintuitive, thus gaining the benefits of teams.

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INTRODUCTION TO TOPIC

Traditionally, American corporations have adopted a hierarchical, centralized structure. In addition to a layer of top management executives (and a Board of Directors), there are departments and divisions, each with its own hierarchy. Employees are managed and directed by their supervisors and are rewarded on the basis of individual merit. The hierarchical organization is highly structured, allows for clear definition of roles, and exhibits a clear line of command. Decisions about organizational goals can be made and implemented with little input when necessary. Further, the hierarchical structure appeals to the American drive to achieve, as employees who are motivated can work their way up the ranks, gaining status, prestige, and responsibility.

The hierarchical organization, however, is not without its challenges. This environment frequently encourages conformity, enables managers to make decisions in a vacuum, defines jobs in narrow terms, and perpetuates lengthy, rule-driven bureaucratic processes. Further, poor (or nonexistent) communication between departments results in lack of awareness of the work and goals of other departments. This leads to duplication of effort, or worse, departments canceling out each other's work. While reward systems are intended to motivate employees to produce quality work, the reality is that rewards are often determined by seniority or favoritism (which hierarchies were designed to prevent) rather than meaningful contribution (Gordon, 1994.)

Faced with an increasingly competitive and global business environment coupled with the pace of technological change, many organizational leaders question the efficacy of the traditional hierarchical corporate structure and consider alternate means of achieving their organizational goals (Wellins, 1992). One of these approaches is the implementation of a team-based structure. Self-directing work teams (SDWTs) are work units composed of small groups of employees who are empowered to make decisions and independently carry out the functions of their teams in pursuit of defined goals. This design is intended to increase flexibility, efficiency, and productivity, offer higher employee satisfaction and motivation, and allow the organization to benefit fully from its workforce's skill base. When faced with a complex problem, a team can generally offer more and better solutions than employees working independently (Comer, 1995). By implementing teams, organizational leaders hope to maximize output and contribution by maximizing the use of individual abilities, while better coordinating the efforts of the organizational units.

The transition to a team-based organization can be precarious and time-consuming. Many companies invest time, money, and effort to attempt to put this structure in place only to see it fail. A probable source of many of the problems associated with transitioning to and maintaining a team-based organization is national culture. A team culture requires cooperation, mutual responsibility and support, common goals, and emphasis on the good of the whole. America, however, is an individualistic society, characterized by independence, priority of personal goals, emphasis on

accomplishments, informality, and competition (Bakhtari, 1995; Chen, 1998; Earley, 1989; Stamps, 1996).

Definition of Terms

Mohrman, Cohen, and Mohrman, Jr. (1995) define a team as “a group of individuals who work together to produce products or deliver services for which they are mutually accountable. Team members share goals and are mutually held accountable for meeting them, they are interdependent in their accomplishment, and they affect the results through their interactions with one another. Because the team is held collectively accountable, the work of integrating with one another is included among the responsibilities of each member” (pp.39-40).

Mohrman et al. define a team-based organization as “an organization in which teams are the performing units” (p. xv), adding that “creating a team-based organization differs from simply using teams; it requires the ultimate redesign of the entire organization. The transition entails multiple years of learning and iteration. The product is a dynamic, laterally oriented system in which teams and business units, in shifting configuration, enact an organizational strategy for succeeding in an increasingly demanding environment” (p. xv).

Morris, Davis, and Allen (1994) define culture as “a learned, socially transmitted set of behavioral standards. It is held, expressed, and shared by individuals through their personal values, norms, activities, attitudes, cognitive processes, interpretation of symbols, feelings, ideas, reactions and morals. . . . At the broadest level, culture provides

a basic framework for social interaction, and represents a cohesive element among the individual members of a society” (p.??).

Purpose of and Rationale for the Study

Significance

Organizations have invested great amounts of time, money, and effort on restructuring efforts; many have chosen teams as their new structure, and still others are currently in the process of doing so. Establishing a link between culture and the potential of work teams will serve businesses as well as academics. The principal advantage is a degree of predictability of a company’s future success with teams. This paper is written with the recognition that determining what constitutes success with teams is a complex and wide-ranging issue. For this reason, the current study will neither attempt to categorize successful teams and failed teams nor provide an inventory of measures of success, but rather refer to success in terms of what the organizational leaders perceive as having met their objectives. If a company’s culture is determined to be unsuitable for teams, one of two things can happen. Either measures can be taken to address the dissimilarity, or the organization may make an informed decision to pursue other avenues of change to meet its goals. Similarly, a company daunted by the uncertainty of adopting a team approach may find the prospects more encouraging in light of cultural considerations. On a more general level, insights can be gained about the force of culture

in cultivating certain types of behavior, along with understanding how realistic it is to alter culture in order to smooth the way to other goals.

Scope

The study will be limited to consideration of American culture and mid- to large-sized corporate organizations, excluding not-for-profit organizations; the teams discussed will consist of knowledge workers (this term will be defined in detail in Chapter Two), not manufacturing employees or assembly lines. This is not intended to be a cross-cultural examination, but instead will analyze the effects of national culture and corporate culture (in the United States) as they relate to companies considering transitioning to, and sustaining, team-based organizations. The study will focus on the most recent studies available, and will concern permanent teams such as SDWTs and cross-functional teams, not project, virtual, or parallel teams. The focus of the paper will be theoretical, and will result in the proposal of a model. For this particular thesis, case studies will not be conducted; to be conclusive, the quantity and breadth of cases required would extend beyond the parameters of the thesis. Instead, the thesis will culminate in a model describing cultural components to consider in a transition, with emphasis on values and practices. The resources will be primarily articles and books published within the last ten years. This will best represent contemporary trends, concerns, findings, and evolution of theory so as to address the difficulties of modern organizations.

METHOD

The assumption motivating the thesis is that there is a conflict between American culture and a culture of teams, which may be the root of many of the other problems related to transitioning from a hierarchical organizational structure to a team-based structure. This assumption raises the following questions:

- Is the team approach, then, fundamentally incompatible with American culture?
- If so, in what ways can corporate culture mediate the incompatibility? And is it possible to create a model of an ideal team culture?
- To what degree is corporate culture a function of national culture?
- Can upper management realistically expect its employees to set aside years of experience and “programming” in order to function within a group identity?

The literature will no doubt reveal a more complicated explanation of this conflict than a simple individualism-collectivism dichotomy. There is also the assumption that, regardless of regional variations, there is an overarching American culture that can be described and referred to as a constant. Another assumption is that a team-based structure is viable for some companies and not for others. This suggests that resolving the American culture/team culture conflict is possible, but that teams are not an organizational magic bullet, and therefore, not appropriate for every organization.

The first step is assembling literature on the strengths and weaknesses of team-based organizational structures in order to determine the reasons that organizations

consider such a major transition. This information should come from academic sources as well as mainstream business publications in order to understand the full scope of the perceptions about teams and the academic findings. What do organizations hope to achieve? What do they expect to find in teams that they are not finding in hierarchies? Patterns should emerge that will not only communicate contemporary organizational needs, but also their prospects for the future. The literature should also reveal the challenges facing a team-based organization, whether it is an organization in transition or one that has mature teams. Broad problem areas should emerge that will point to consistencies among American team-based organizations.

Next, it is necessary to collect and review existing literature on American culture and on corporate culture, especially studies that draw on cumulative research (because these will represent the progress of academic study in these areas.) Quantitative results offer an organized way of thinking about complex cultural issues, whether national or corporate; thus they provide a framework in which qualitative explanations can be better understood. In cases where authors suggest dimensions or components of culture, comparison will be more direct and valid.

The next step is to compare dimensions of American and corporate culture, which should reveal whether there are areas of overlap, or if the literature depicts national and corporate culture as different types of constructs. Reviewing the problem areas associated with team-based organizations should point to any correlations between those problems and the literature on culture. For example, if both national and corporate culture address authority, is this a problem area in teams? If so, what are the implications? A bigger

picture of the interaction of the two cultures should begin to take shape. From this quantitative approach, the qualitative discussions of these types of culture will have a clearer context.

The thesis will culminate in the presentation of a descriptive model that reflects cultural considerations of movement from a hierarchical to a team-based structure. The model should enable a preliminary assessment of current organizational culture (in the context of American culture), and provoke thought regarding the desired future culture. By depicting both passive and active cultural elements of a collaborative workplace, the model will propose a culture that fosters cooperation and provides teams with a supportive environment. Being a corporate model, it will emerge from the literature on corporate culture and demonstrate how corporate culture, as the immediate work environment, can mediate certain aspects of American culture. The model should ultimately answer the following questions: Can teams survive and in American companies? If so, how? Can teams meet organizational goals?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Benefits and Challenges of Team-Based Organizational Structures

Introducing her study on coaching self-managing teams, Wageman (1997) explained that teams appeal to organizations because they foster increased organizational learning and improved performance and flexibility while maximizing the potential of the workers' skill base and enhancing employee commitment to the organization. Journalists such as Dumaine (1994) and researchers such as Shipper and Manz (1992) have also found that teams better utilize employee abilities. Cohen, Ledford, Jr., and Spreitzer (1996) and Kirkman and Shapiro (1997) developed models of team effectiveness, in which they cited increased productivity, improved employee satisfaction, and reduced costs as benefits associated with effective teams. Collectively, these studies explain part of organizational motivation to adopt teams, and emphasize that substantial benefits of teams are only realized when teams achieve effectiveness, not just when they are implemented.

In investigating the problems encountered within team-based organizations, it is important to consider academic sources along with mainstream business publications where business leaders discuss their successes and challenges.

Numerous researchers introduce their studies of teams by documenting stumbling blocks encountered with team-based organizations. Bergmann and DeMeuse (1996) and Caudron (1994) noted the problem of resistance by managers as well as employees. The

latter has also been observed by Earley and Gibson (1998), Gordon (1994), Kirkman and Shapiro (1997), and Wageman (1997). Additionally, Gordon (1994) cited leadership, accountability, multiskilling, and interpersonal dynamics as hurdles that teams must consistently overcome. Because so many studies reveal similar problem areas encountered by teams, reliable patterns emerge that address the question--In what ways can these problems be attributed to or addressed by culture?

American Culture

In a study of social loafing comparing the United States with the People's Republic of China, Earley (1989) described Americans as having a strong work ethic, valuing individual achievements and rewards, emphasizing individual goals, and being motivated by self-interest. Many researchers (Bakhtari, 1995; Hui & Triandis, 1986; Morris, Davis, & Allen, 1994; Spence, 1985) independently reached the same conclusions. Spence (1985) explored the concept of work ethic in a historical analysis of American culture, emphasizing the Protestant work ethic of early Americans as a driving force in the way Americans approach work today.

The individualism-collectivism dichotomy is a recurring theme in the literature regarding American culture, with America held up as a representative individualistic culture. Earley and Gibson's (1998) research found that members of an individualistic society have unique ways of communicating that differentiate them from collectivists; the implication is that studies and findings from teams in other countries may not be relevant

to American teams. Other research performed by Earley (1989, 1993) focuses on social loafing, which is the tendency of employees to expend less effort in a group setting where other members will do the work. The issue of social loafing is important to this investigation because it is unique to individualistic cultures (Comer, 1995; Earley, 1989, 1993; Gabrenya, Jr., Wang, & Latane, 1985). Veiga (1991) identified six conditions under which social loafing occurs, all of which can be considered within a team-based context. The six conditions are as follows: indifferent group climate, meaningless task(s), low task mastery expectations, presence of a particularly competent member, presence of a persuasive member, and pressure to conform. Not only is this body of work important to understanding the problems associated with American team-based organizations, but it is valuable in developing a model to address cultural concerns.

The work of Geert Hofstede is crucial in thinking about culture in terms of models and dimensions. In 1983, Hofstede proposed four areas of national value differences, which are widely cited in subsequent studies. The four areas are power distance, which describes the degree of inequality between those in authority and those who are not; individualism, which describes the degree to which a nation's people behave and make decisions based on individual concerns; masculinity, which refers to the degree of competition, drive to succeed, and assertiveness in a culture; and uncertainty avoidance, which indicates a cultural preference for structure and stability. In 1994, Hofstede added a fifth area, long-term orientation, which refers to qualities such as thriftiness and perseverance. Hofstede's work is useful to the researcher in two ways; first, it offers a context in which the qualitative literature can be examined and to some extent organized,

and second, it provides a means of comparing national culture with corporate culture in order to determine their relationship and evaluate consistencies and distinctions.

Corporate Culture

According to Ott (1989), national culture is one of three determinants of organizational culture, which means that national culture and corporate culture are interrelated. Numerous articles cite the importance of artifacts, assumptions, values, norms, stories/myths, founders, language, rituals, and symbols in defining an organization (Bloor and Dawson, 1994; Clemmer, 1993; Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Heng, 1997; Hofstede, 1990; Juechter, Fisher, & Alford, 1998; Pascale, 1985; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Pettigrew, 1979; Quick, 1992; Schein, 1985; Schwartz & Davis, 1981; Wilkins, 1983, 1984). Pettigrew (1979) further argued that to varying degrees, these elements and products of organizational culture are interdependent. Harris and Mossholder (1996) proposed six indicators of an organization's culture in their study on perceived congruence. The consistencies among the studies of corporate culture help establish a consensus as to how corporate culture is manifested. With regard to initiating changes in culture, the bodies of work described above provide a means of operationalizing cultural change efforts.

Hofstede (1990) and Cooke and Rousseau (1988) independently found that although it is a complex construct, corporate culture is measurable, which means that it is possible to study corporate culture in objective, quantitative terms. Culture is also

distinguishable from (but related to) climate (Denison, 1996; Glick, 1985; Verbeke, 1998). Understanding the distinctions between the two is useful in maintaining the focus of the present study, and possibly eliminating research that does not directly address the issues of the present study.

A strong culture is an asset to an organization in transition, as attested to by Child (1984) and Quick (1992), who maintained that a strong culture can moderate the effects of such influential factors as organizational structure and disruptive change, and Barney (1986), who confirmed previous research indicating that strong, highly individual organizational cultures are a source of sustained financial performance. In a study of risk tolerance, Schwartz and Davis (1981) found that during times of strategic change, an organization's culture will be either a source of strength that catalyzes the desired changes or a source of difficulty and challenge. Research conducted by Ouchi (1981) and a case study presented by Shipper and Manz (1992) indicated that a strong culture can actually provide an alternative to formal structure. This bolsters the credibility of the present study by suggesting that culture has the potential to be more durable than organizational structure.

Hofstede (1998) offered six dimensions of distinguishing practices of organizations. They are as follows: process versus results orientation, employee versus job orientation, parochial versus professional, open versus closed system, loose versus tight control, and normative versus pragmatic. This way of assessing organizational culture is very similar to Hofstede's way of assessing national culture, and is useful in drawing comparisons and contrasts between the two. Within the culture literature,

consistencies emerge in describing and defining organizational culture. Schein (1985) proposed a much-cited model of corporate culture that consists of artifacts, values, and assumptions. Hatch (1993) added manifestation, realization, symbolization, and interpretation to Schein's model. As with national culture, the importance of these studies lies in the repetition of themes and components that describe organizational culture. It should be noted, however, that simply assigning a culture's values to a set of cultural dimensions will not yield a complete understanding of the culture. While these approaches are a reasonable place to start examining a culture, other considerations should be factored in, such as the organization's history, industry, values, climate, and innovation.

CHAPTER 1

AMERICAN CULTURE

Because national culture is the macroenvironment in which workers live, reviewing American culture is important in considering the ways in which American workers function in the workplace. The national culture reflects the beliefs, values, precedents, heroes, and expectations of a country's people, and an examination of the American cultural context reveals certain obstacles (or apparent obstacles) with the team-based organizational approach.

The literature exploring American culture offers a wide-ranging view of its subject. For the purposes of this study, the term "American culture" will refer to the group of characteristics that are determined to be the most typical of the pervasive culture of the United States. To speak authoritatively on American culture would be fruitless due to the numerous variables and manifestations and would certainly exceed the boundaries of the current discussion. Therefore in order to move toward findings that are to varying degrees relevant to the greatest number of organizations, the characterizing attributes of "American culture" discussed in this chapter are those addressed consistently in the literature regarding American culture. Similarly, Chapter Three's discussion of corporate culture in no way constitutes authoritative statements or findings that can be universally applied to any corporation in the United States. Instead, the paper includes qualities

typical of American organizations along with dimensions of corporate culture that allow the reader to think about specific corporate cultures in an organized, objective manner.

Researchers define American culture by its strong work ethic and its emphasis on self-interest, often manifest in individual achievements, rewards, and goals. America is also known for its fast pace, directness, quick decision-making, friendliness, and informality. Perhaps it is due to the modern pace of decision-making, business transactions, and other organizational systems, but Americans are known for their impatience; they tend to want immediate and effective change without a lengthy waiting period. Hammond and Morrison (1996) commented on this quality: “We are the most time-obsessed culture in the world. Time is money, and we want it--and everything else--now. If we don’t get it or do it now, somebody else will, and we don’t like being second” (p. 5).

In a frequently cited study, Hofstede (1983) proposed four dimensions by which all national cultures can be understood and compared with others. The dimensions are-- power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and masculinity. Power distance refers to the superior-subordinate dynamic in a culture; it describes how close in stature or equality subordinates are to their superiors. It also concerns the use of power and how superiors make decisions with regard to their subordinates. Power distance applies not only to business settings, but also to a country’s political system, and the two are generally parallel. Uncertainty avoidance refers to the need to make careful plans, the perception of the authority of rules, and feelings of nervousness or tension that arise from a lack of planning or rules. In an organization, individualism refers to the importance of

employees' personal time and freedom, and the emphasis on the employee as the active entity in an organization rather than the employee's dependence on the organization.

Masculinity refers to the importance placed on salary, recognition, promotion, and challenge rather than on relationships, security, and a pleasant work environment.

In Hofstede's study, the United States scored low on power distance, which implies interdependence between co-workers and superiors, equal rights, cooperation between those with power and those without it, and fair use of power. The United States also scored low on uncertainty avoidance, which suggests acceptance of the uncertainties inherent in life, respect for emotional privacy, constructive use of competition, recognition for achievement, willingness to take risks, limitations placed on quantity of rules, and the belief that authorities are in place to serve the citizens. The United States scored high on individualism, which is characterized by emphasizing self-interest and self-responsibility, "I" consciousness, valuing initiative and individual achievement, autonomy, pleasure, and the belief that everyone is entitled to a private life and a personal opinion. The United States also scored high on the masculinity scale. This indicates an orientation on money and objects, living to work, valuing achievement and independence, decisiveness, clear definition of gender roles, and respect for those who are successful.

While there are variations across the United States, most visible in subcultures, the research taken as a whole indicates that there are general terms that can be used to discuss American culture. For the purposes of this study, these generally agreed-upon qualities of American culture will be taken into consideration. These qualities fall into the major categories of work practices, self-interest, interpersonal skills, social loafing, and

individual achievements, rewards, and goals. These areas encompass the general beliefs, norms, and expectations of American workers.

Work Habits

The American work force is characterized by a strong work ethic that dictates working hard to perform well at work and working almost year-round. In reference to the latter, Stamps (1996) observed, “Europeans have a hard enough time fathoming how we survive on a paltry two- or three-week vacation a year; they’re used to five or six” (p. 24).

In an extended discussion of the American work ethic, Spence (1985) traced its origins to the early settlers who lived according to a Protestant work ethic that evolved into the modern success- and achievement-oriented work attitudes so prevalent today. She noted that early Americans took great pride in their ability to overcome hardships and emerge as self-reliant individuals, a quality observed as early as the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville in Democracy in America and later championed by such literary icons as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Spence added, “The United States is an achievement-oriented society that has historically encouraged and honored individual accomplishment and the attainment of material prosperity” (p. 1286).

Spence (1985) explained that the Puritans believed in having a direct relationship with God and in avoiding the distractions of earthly loyalties and organizations. They saw it as their obligation to toil so that the fruits of their labor would glorify God. An interesting conflict emerged, however, between the virtue of frugality and that of

productivity; pursuing both would necessarily bring about a degree of wealth, but the accumulation of material goods was believed to encourage vice. Spence offered a passage written by John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, in which he acknowledges the dilemma, and advises Christians to continue to work hard and spend little, saving all they can and, if it happens, become rich. What came out of this tradition was a moral duty to be productive and create a better life for oneself and one's family. In fact, failure to do so was seen as an indication of a deficiency in character. According to Spence, these views became the basis of the contemporary secular value of hard work, which has since been coupled with a competitive drive. As Spence commented,

Many believe that in order for the individual to be successful, it is necessary not only to learn how to compete but also to develop the desire to “win” and to gain positive enjoyment in competing against others. . . . Among those who accept this perspective, this kind of interpersonal competitiveness is an integral feature of the work ethic and achievement motivation. (p. 1289)

Hammond and Morrison (1996) found another characteristic of American culture that has come about as the result of America's founding, and that is choice. They noted that, with the exception of Native Americans (who already occupied the land) and African-Americans (who were brought against their will), everyone who came to America came by choice “to start a new life in a land where they could choose what, where, and who they want to be” (p. 5).

A key structural element of American work practices is the traditional hierarchy. While the hierarchy is better categorized as a characteristic of corporate culture, there are

examples of hierarchies outside of business, most notably the military. The place of hierarchies in the American employee's mindset will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

In summary, the American work ethic is strong and seems to emerge from distinctly American roots. Traditionally exercised in a hierarchical work structure, the American work ethic involves the drive to be successful, which leads to competitiveness and self-interest.

Self-Interest

Regardless of industry or profession, American workers are motivated by self-interest. Stamps (1996) referred to the "cowboy individualism" that characterizes the American workplace. Stamps interviewed John Bing, owner of International Training Associates, a company that provides expert cultural training for employees working in foreign countries and, thus, in the contexts of new cultures. Bing commented that individuality is the most distinctive American cultural trait. He added, "The idea ingrained into each of us is that, when all is said and done, you're on your own" (p.??). In a study comparing American management styles with those of Middle Eastern managers, Bakhtari (1995) described Americans as independent and individualistic people who value freedom and believe that they determine their own destinies. It is this belief that motivates Americans to make decisions based on what they perceive to be the most desirable outcomes for themselves, with comparatively little regard for the collective

whole. Further, Americans understand that this is a pervasive element of their culture, and therefore, expect others to behave in the same way.

Many authors propose dichotomies to enable readers to better understand cultural differences, usually between the West and the East. While these may serve a narrow purpose, serious readers should be wary about accepting statements of mutual exclusivity. The idea, for instance, that a culture is either individualistic or cooperative implies that a culture that is largely individualistic is incompatible with cooperative mechanisms. Similarly, accepting that the people of a culture focus on either themselves or their social systems oversimplifies complex belief structures, if taken literally. In the context of the present study, drawing too-sharp distinctions rules out potentially useful means of understanding how teams can function and stay viable in American culture. Instead, it is better to be conservative and discuss different cultures in terms of tendencies.

There is a great deal of research on the individualism/collectivism dichotomy, which is useful to the extent that it is based on observations of contrasting national cultures. Americans are considered to be highly individualistic. Morris et al. (1994) define individualism in this way:

a self-orientation, an emphasis on self-sufficiency and control, the pursuit of individual goals that may or may not be consistent with in-group goals, a willingness to confront members of the in-group to which a person belongs, and a culture where people derive pride from their own accomplishments. In an individualistic environment, self-interest and achievement of personal goals are

key motivators. They are hesitant to contribute to collective action unless their own efforts are recognize, preferring instead to benefit from the efforts of others.
(p.67)

Consequently, the researchers suggest, individualism encourages self-confidence, personal responsibility, and innovation as a result of competition, but such an environment is also likely to foster selfishness and personal stress. In their cross-cultural study of individualism and collectivism, Hui and Triandis (1986) borrow from psychology literature to demonstrate that individualism consists of a sense of personal identity (from the work of Erikson), self-actualization (from the work of Maslow), and internal locus of control (from the work of Rotter), all indicative of an “I” consciousness.

While the differences between individualistic and collectivist national cultures can be drawn with broad strokes, this is not to say that certain objectives cannot be met within either context, albeit by different means. Chen, Chen, and Meindl (1998) contend that although collectivists have a stronger tendency toward cooperation, individualists learn to cooperate when individual goals are positively related to each other. In fact, Chen et al. distinguish cooperation mechanisms that represent the results of research conducted primarily on Westerners with individualistic tendencies. Their research reveals the following about individualistic cultures: superordinate goals are achieved through goal (or outcome) interdependence, trust is cognition-based, accountability is individual-based, communication takes place through partial channels, and reward distribution is equity-based.

In summary, American self-interest is manifest in the workplace, where workers learn that they are expected to look out for themselves and that everyone else is doing the same. American workers tend to value their own interests over the good of the whole, which is accounted for in much of the individualist/collectivist literature. Because there is a general consensus among American workers regarding their work context, it stands to reason that their interpersonal skills are characterized by the unique ways in which they communicate with each other.

Interpersonal Skills

Chen et al. (1998) are not alone in their observation that members of individualistic cultures communicate differently with each other than members of collectivist cultures. The partial mode of communication described by Chen et al. (1998) is characterized by the use of restricted channels, such as audio only, visual only, or written only. Earley & Gibson (1998), however, maintained that Americans rely on nonverbal cues in interpersonal communication. This may be a feature unique to Americans among individualists, or Americans may be adapting to technology by adopting partial channels of communication over full channels. The advent of technology can be seen as a natural pairing with partial channels; business men and women frequently rely on e-mail, voice mail, and facsimile messages to communicate with one another. Face-to-face communication accounts for only a fraction of the communication in which an employee participates in on a day-to-day basis. Chen et al. added that individualists have a tendency toward low-context communication in which most of the

information is explicit and contained in the words of the message. This observation was also made by Abramson, Keating, & Lane (1996), who noted the American preference for exchanging impersonal, objective information, and Stamps (1996), who pointed out the American preoccupation with e-mail and aversion to meetings. This, too, is relevant to the changes technology has made in the workplace, as Chen et al. noted, “Partial communication, whether by paper, telephone, or electronics, decontextualizes the situation, leaving out many additional sources of social meanings, feelings, and intentions implicit in face-to-face interactions” (p. 296).

There are also distinctions in the ways individualists and collectivists communicate with members of their reference groups. Whereas collectivists treat in-group members and out-group members differently, individualists demonstrate more consistency in their interactions with people, regardless of group (Chen et al., 1998). Earley and Gibson (1998) characterized collectivists’ in-group communication as being more intimate and conducive to self-disclosure, demonstrating more perceived similarity among members, and exhibiting more confidence than their communication with out-group members. Like Chen et al., Earley and Gibson found that individualists, on the other hand, applied the same manner of communicating with in-group and out-group members. Bakhtari (1995) associated the American disregard for group membership with its informality, adding that Americans are informal and treat people equally regardless of differences in age or social status.

In summary, Americans communicate with each other in the workplace by relying on nonverbal cues and assuming an informal, direct style of interaction. They tend to

prefer partial channels, which is consistent with the adoption of new technological means of communication, such as electronic mail and voice mail. American workers also treat in-group and out-group organizational members in a similar fashion which indicates that they are not particularly bonded by a strong sense of loyalty and protectiveness for the in-group members.

Social Loafing

In some cases, American self-interest and informality brings about social loafing. The definition of individualism offered by Morris et al. (1994) suggests the potential for social loafing in individualistic cultures. Social loafing refers to the tendency of an individual to contribute less when a group is collectively responsible for a task or tasks. On one hand, social loafing conflicts with the strong work ethic previously described, but on the other hand, social loafing enables an employee to enjoy the benefits of the group while pursuing his/her own goals individually. Social loafing has been shown to occur in situations involving both physical and intellectual work (Comer, 1995). A study by Veiga (1991) revealed the following six most common reasons managers engage in self-limiting behavior in groups: the presence of a highly qualified member (when another member is perceived to have more expertise), the presence of a persuasive member (when another member is perceived as leading the group), perceived low task mastery expectations (when the individual feels that his/her abilities are not significant enough to contribute to the group's performance), assignment of an unimportant or meaningless task (when the individual feels that the task is meaningless), feelings of pressure to conform (when the

individual feels intimidated by one or more group members), and an indifferent group climate (when the climate is perceived as being disorganized and/or uncommitted).

Organizational studies have consistently shown that, when compared with more collectivist cultures (such as that of China), American culture is highly conducive to this behavior (Comer, 1995; Earley, 1989; Earley, 1993; Gabrenya et al., 1985; Morris et al., 1994). Researchers contend that the larger the group, the more pronounced social loafing becomes as the individual feels that his/her effort is more expendable, less influential, and less subject to evaluation (Earley, 1989; Price, 1987). Comer (1995) explained that not being evaluated creates an environment in which there is no reward for work and no punishment for lack of work. Further, the individual frequently anticipates the loafing of other members of the group and does not want to set a precedent for being the group member who will pick up the slack (Comer, 1995; Earley, 1989). Consequently, the individual will focus on pursuing his/her personal goals rather than those of the group in order to enjoy the benefits of both. This demonstrates that self-interest is such a fundamental part of American culture, it thrives even in group settings. Employees who engage in social loafing perceive it as the best course of action that will reap the greatest individual rewards and accolades.

Individual Achievements and Rewards

Americans tend to be extrinsically motivated, that is, the opportunity to earn rewards for work performance enhances that performance. Spence (1985) observed that the pursuit of self-interest is closely related to “achievement-related behaviors” (p.1290),

adding, “The United States is an achievement-oriented society that has historically encouraged and honored individual accomplishment and the attainment of material prosperity” (p. 1286). As members of an individualistic culture, Americans value a system in which rewards are distributed according to individual contribution (Chen et al., 1998). American workers are accustomed to being given a set of responsibilities and/or goals for which they are individually accountable (Morris et al., 1994), and they expect that, having fulfilled their obligations to the organization, they can expect an individual reward.

CHAPTER 2

CHALLENGES FACING AMERICAN TEAMS

American businesses encounter a multitude of problems when faced with the prospect of introducing work teams into their existing organizations. While many of them overcome such obstacles, many others do not. Comparing the literature regarding these problems with what is known of the beliefs, values, and assumptions of American culture reveals correlations that may begin to explain some of the fundamental difficulties. Understanding these underlying conflicts may enable organizational leaders to better understand what transitioning to teams entails and what is necessary to support teams so that they have a better chance of surviving and contributing to the organization in a meaningful way. In some cases, this understanding may enable organizational decision-makers to determine early that such a move is neither cost-effective nor as strategically viable as they may have believed.

Work Habits

Perhaps the most obvious area of conflict is the adjustment from a hierarchical organizational structure to a team-based structure. Mohrman et al. (1995) explained this conflict as follows:

Teams violate the logic of the design of a bureaucratic, hierarchical, segmented organization. If the organization is not redesigned with a new logic, management can deal with dynamics and resistance to the point of utter exhaustion and cynicism and still not effect change in the way people behave. The traditional organization often chews up teams and spits them out. (p. XVII)

Mohrman et al. went on to describe four areas in which teams tend to encounter problems: designing teams, embedding teams in the organization, developing team and management capabilities, and aligning the context.

Embedding teams and developing capabilities stem from the workers' and managers' learned work context. In the case of embedding teams in the organization, problems frequently arise when teams are launched in a vacuum, with little regard for how they are to interact with each other and/or the rest of the organization. Team members and managers are accustomed to functioning within a hierarchy, so determining where and how they fit into (or replace) the comfortable hierarchy creates confusion and uncertainty. Mohrman et al. (1995) observed,

A common problem early in the transition to teams in many organizations is that teams are established for a particular purpose and then left to "float" without a clear sense of how their mission relates to the rest of the organization and to the

accountability and review process. Team members (and managers) often have no idea to whom the team is accountable, and they sometimes develop very unrealistic expectations regarding the amount autonomy and authority they have. If management makes its expectations clear only later, when it reviews and evaluates the work of the team (and perhaps even reverses that work, if it feels the team has not met expectations), tension is inevitable. This need to clarify the accountability of the team--for what and to whom--is frequently learned the hard way in the early stages of teaming. (p. 336)

What is particularly revealing about this statement is the repeated use of the word “accountability,” which suggests the team members’ and managers’ needs for some semblance of the traditional hierarchy to which they are accustomed. In a hierarchy, accountability is clear in role definition and in the line of command. Without this basic structural feature, Mohrman et al. pointed out, organizational members become confused and frustrated, and thus, presumably, less effective or productive. Gordon (1994) also listed accountability as an important issue in transitioning to teams.

An important part of embedding and developing teams is organizational support, which is often lacking. Caudron (1994) surveyed over eight hundred executives in various industries regarding their experience with implementing self-directed work teams. Lack of support was cited as an obstacle in three manifestations--first-line supervisory resistance (47%), lack of management support (31%), and lack of union support (24%). Bergmann and De Meuse (1996) also cited resistance by executives, managers, and first-line supervisors to relinquishing authority. These numbers indicate

significant resistance to teams by those who hold power in organizations, presumably because they prefer to keep things as they are, which is in a hierarchy. Resistance to reallocating power may account for Bergmann and De Meuse's (1996) finding that, in the manufacturing plant they studied, only one-third of the human resource professionals reported any actual shift in power.

Another area of confusion is empowerment. Given the new team-based structure, team members and managers are not always clear about what empowerment does and does not mean (Dumaine, 1994; Mohrman et al., 1995). Without clarification about the parameters of a team's empowerment, one of two things happens--either the assumption is made that empowerment connotes an unrealistically high degree of autonomy, or managers presume too little empowerment for their teams, thereby restricting and disempowering teams. Commenting on this tendency, Caudron (1994) wrote, "Another problem related to empowerment is . . . that employees will embrace their new responsibility as decision makers only to be shot down by managers who aren't used to having their direct reports take charge" (p. 43). She added that employees themselves sometimes have trouble accepting their new decision-making roles and being their own bosses. Gordon (1994) observed the same phenomenon: "The first paradox of empowered work teams is that people often have to be forced by management to cast off the yoke of management" (p.27). Employees who have learned over the years to accept authority in the workplace are not always enthusiastic about assuming more responsibility and shouldering more accountability. Bergmann and De Meuse (1996) wrote, "Employee reluctance may involve more than just a reluctance to assume power; it

may involve a questioning of the team concept itself. American individualism is intimately interwoven into the fabric of American life” (p. 39).

Challenges also arise from efforts to develop team and management capabilities, which requires extensive training (new skills, new work habits) in order to demonstrate how to perform within the new structure. This is a process that is best approached along a continuum, rather than as a “quick-fix” training seminar; this requires patience and effort of both the organization and its members. Unfortunately, American impatience represents one hurdle, while lack of effort (due to cultural resistance or lack of buy-in) constitutes another hurdle in this respect.

Mohrman et al. (1995) found that the training and support required by teams is often underestimated, especially when dealing with knowledge workers, who are regarded as highly educated employees with strong interpersonal skills. Mohrman et al. describe knowledge work as work that which “involves multiple, specialized knowledge bases, is frequently performed by specialists who expect professional autonomy (but are often embedded in highly interdependent work networks), is nonroutine, and requires judgment, interpretation, and the creation of knowledge” (p.51). While many workers resist autonomy, knowledge workers may expect it to a high degree. As specialists, their priority is often staying current in their respective fields, and thus camaraderie for them is more likely in the form of a professional guild rather than a work team. Bloor and Dawson (1994) noted that professional groups foster unique ways of interpreting people, events, and objects faced in the day-to-day business environment, all of which makes professional consideration an important factor in planning for teams in their cultural

context. Professional groups develop their own subculture within the organization that, along with the corporate and national cultures, influences the ways in which their members function and think in the workplace. Because teams are often formed with the intention of bringing multiple perspectives to bear on a particular task or organizational function, awareness of professional subcultures is necessary in team planning and in the establishment of team charters. Mohrman et al. added,

Furthermore, the environment is dynamic, contributing an inherent uncertainty to decision making that already entails contention because of multiple perspectives. The dynamics of teams in a knowledge-work setting are affected by this uncertainty, contention, and complexity. In the midst of all this, they must be able to establish sufficient shared understanding to allow them to proceed with their work. (p. 51)

In the midst of adapting to a work environment that challenges many of the precepts of American culture, team members may lose sight of the reason they are a team at all. Sometimes the effort to define new roles and establish new guidelines for the team environment distracts teams from focusing on customers (Gordon, 1994). Mohrman et al. (1995) discovered another common misstep--to address the need for learning new skills and behaviors, organizations often provide individual classroom training (rather than working with the team as a whole) when the teams would be better served by training provided while the team is actually at work, thus giving the training concepts an appropriate context. As for managers, they frequently have difficulty adjusting to their new roles. Mohrman et al. noted,

It is hard to overestimate the difference between managing teams and managing individuals. . . . It should be stressed that we found, in our research, many cases where even managers who were strong advocates of the team organization required a great deal of assistance in making the required transition in management style. (p. 338)

Self-Interest

The individualist nature of American workers presents another cultural barrier to the success of self-directed work teams. Americans, raised to look out for themselves and succeed in a competitive environment, can find teaming counter-intuitive. Caudron (1994) explained,

Americans raised to function as individuals, to respect and accept authority, and to expect increased wages based on seniority, don't adjust easily to the team concept and can hinder a team's effectiveness. . . . North Americans are raised in a society that values individualism. . . . Even the athletic teams we so admire give trophies to the most valuable player. (pp. 41-42)

In a team, it is necessary to trust and work with colleagues rather than viewing them as the competition for praise and advancement. Although teams are often formed to include a diverse range of skills and perspectives, workers tend to want to work with people like themselves (Gordon, 1994), which can sustain team members' reluctance to trust each other. Bryant (1998) noted that many people simply have trouble overcoming the sense that "individualism trumps teamwork for getting ahead" (p.D1). The very nature of

individualist cultures, as previously discussed, indicates a substantial cultural challenge to implementing a team-based structure. Such a structural shift requires a fundamental priority shift from the self to the group. The competitive drive poses still another potential problem even when team members begin functioning as a whole. Gordon (1994) found, “Teams lose sight of the big picture. Each tries to make itself look good at the expense of larger organizational goals” (p. 28).

Issues of trust and openness are a major concern, especially in the early stages of the transition to teams. Mohrman et al. (1995) list information sharing as one of the typical problem areas associated with the transition to teams. This observation makes sense given the tradition in the American workplace that exclusive information often provides its holder with a competitive edge. For the good of the team, however, team members must learn to be open and forthcoming with information so that the team can make the best possible decisions and function effectively, while building and maintaining trusting work relationships. Similarly, managers accustomed to making decisions for workers must learn to be open with teams regarding information they have that the team can use to make better independent decisions. The behavior and decisions of those in authority are influential; members of an organization take their cues from superiors to determine appropriate conduct, effective work methods, and how seriously to take organizational changes. Additionally, employees do not always trust the new system itself, which only compounds feelings of doubt and mistrust among team members. Bryant (1998) commented that ongoing mistrust of teamwork should not be surprising in light of by Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor Paul Osterman’s five-year

survey of five hundred companies that revealed that those using teams to increase productivity and quality did not share the gains with the workers, unless they were unionized.

Interpersonal Skills

In an atmosphere of confusion, insecurity, and mistrust, communication by management should address concerns, provide critical information and guidance, and ease uncertainty. Within teams, communication enables members to find their way and ascertain what interpersonal skills are needed and how to develop them. Although many companies invest time and money into providing training for team members, interpersonal problems frequently prevent teams from becoming effective. Shelton (1995) noted that when employees are instructed to work together in new ways, conflict and stress are likely to ensue, and many of the employees lack the necessary interpersonal skills to cope with working as a member of a team. These skills are important both within and among teams (Bergmann & De Meuse, 1996; Gordon, 1994; Shelton, 1995).

Without appropriate guidance from management, teams are often left wondering what it is they are supposed to do as a team, and how they are to go about doing it, as Dumaine (1994) noted that in such a situation, frustration mounts among the team members as they sit through endless meetings trying to resolve important questions about their purpose and processes. Gordon (1994) also commented on the inordinate amount of time team members spend in meetings. Although it is necessary for team members to assemble for meetings in order to make decisions, delegate, set goals, and review work,

too much time spent in meetings not only means time away from getting work done, but also indicates a lack of shared understanding. A team with strong communication skills and systems is able to spend less time in meetings, yet accomplish more during that time.

Especially during the early stages of transitioning to teams, ongoing communication between the teams and management can help flatten the team's learning curve, thus enabling team members to better understand their mission, goals, and authority, while gaining confidence in the team approach. Without comprehending what the expectations are for a team, its members have the impossible task of trying to meet or exceed those expectations, which is one reason so many teams ultimately fail (Bergmann & De Meuse, 1996). Another barrier to communication, however, is the existing system from the hierarchical structure, much of which is often still in place in the early stages of transition. Mohrman et al. (1995) observed the difficulties teams have with hierarchy-based means of communication:

At the beginning, most aspects of an organization remain unchanged; those that were designed to fit the old logic are still in place. . . . The communication system may be designed to systematically get information only as far as the second-level managers, so teams have to rely on those managers to informally share key information. (p. 338)

Individual Achievement and Rewards

The drive of self-interest is at the heart of the American experience and, consequently, American culture. Therefore, expecting individual employees to

immediately embrace a new collective identity is a set-up for failure. As discussed previously, once a group of individuals is formed into a team, accountability becomes an important issue. This is especially true in light of the evidence of social loafing in individualist cultures. Gordon (1994) noted that one consulting firm considers accountability the problem from which most other team-related difficulties originate. He added that “when people get it into their heads that teamwork is incompatible with hierarchy, they make the further mistake of imagining that accountability itself is suspect” (p. 30). Perhaps this is because people are comfortable with being responsible for their own behavior and decisions, but it is very uncomfortable to experience the lack of control that many team members feel. Commenting on this reaction to teaming, Mohrman et al. (1995) observed,

Part of the difficulty in viewing collective accountability as fair has to do with feelings of control. . . . Especially in the early stages of team transition, team members may not view themselves as having sufficient control over team performance. If they feel that they cannot sufficiently influence the other members of the team, they may be concerned that they will be hurt by others’ poor performance. (p. 358)

Decisions regarding pay are a source of frustration and uncertainty in organizations trying to devise a fair way to compensate and reward teams and their members. Americans are accustomed to, and generally prefer, to be rewarded for individual performance, and often perceive team pay as unfair (Caudron, 1994; Chaudron, 1995; Chen et al., 1998; Dumaine, 1994; Gordon, 1994; Kirkman & Shapiro,

1997). With strict team pay, each member of the team receives equal compensation based on the performance of the team as a whole. Members of individualist cultures tend to resist this approach, preferring instead an equity-based system in which each team member is compensated based on individual contribution and individual performance appraisals, thus preserving a sense of self and independence (Gordon, 1994; Kirkman & Shapiro, 1997). This is particularly relevant to knowledge workers, whose educational and career backgrounds would traditionally demand a higher level of compensation. Knowledge workers are also typically very career-oriented and therefore form expectations regarding seniority.

Case studies bear out the importance of financial incentives to American team members. In a survey of more than eight hundred executives across various industries, Caudron found that 47% named “Incompatible Organizational Systems (Compensation, etc.)” as a barrier to effective team implementation. Similarly, Chaudron (1995) described a case study involving a manufacturing company that implemented a team to improve its engineering, manufacturing, and assembling processes. The team comprised middle managers from five departments, and when the team failed to meet performance expectations, a variety of external problems were found. Among the reasons was a lack of financial incentive to motivate the members to improve the processes the team was intended to address.

Impatience

American impatience may be an underlying force driving many of the troubles teams encounter. With the pace of business and technology steadily increasing, organizations often seek new and innovative ways to stay competitive. In many cases, the decision-makers choose to give self-directed work teams a try, but they fail to invest the time necessary to both prepare for the transition (Shelton, 1995) and to wait for the teams to evolve into effective, productive work units (Bergmann & De Meuse, 1996). Consequently, organizations find themselves with the wrong kinds of teams to achieve the organization's new goals (Dumaine, 1994) or with vague, immeasurable team goals (Clemmer, 1993).

Changes in the organizational structure are necessary, even if teams are being gradually introduced. Teams need to be aligned with the rest of the organization, and with each other, in order to facilitate successful work performance (Clemmer, 1993). The desire for a "quick fix" to an organization's problems or aspirations does not create a suitable environment for effective teaming. Clemmer warned against the "microwave model" of team implementation in which organizational leaders purchase a training program, initiate it, decide what they want the new organization to look like, and expect it to just happen.

In summary, it is evident that at least some of the typical team problems have roots in the characteristics of American culture. The hierarchical structure, to which most American employees are accustomed, supports self-interest and individuality, whereas the team structure seems to ask employees to rethink some of their basic beliefs and

assumptions. The fact that important cultural questions are not always asked early in the decision-making process suggests an underestimation of cultural forces in the work environment. Add to that American impatience and the desire of organizational leaders to declare teams and their effectiveness into existence, and it becomes clear that team needs are too often misunderstood and miscalculated. This chapter has contended that underestimating those cultural forces is the first step toward failure of American work teams. Still, there is the more immediate environment of the organization itself, which has its own cultural landscape. Perhaps it is from corporate culture, as a hybrid of American culture and the organization's roots and practices, that a suitable environment for teams emerges.

CHAPTER 3

CORPORATE CULTURE

Corporate culture is a subset of national culture and represents the microenvironment in which employees work on a day-to-day basis. A nation's culture figures prominently in the backgrounds and viewpoints of the founders and leaders of an organization long before the organization is formed, which exerts a degree of consistency among corporate cultures in a given nation (Baba, Falkenburg, & Hill, 1996). While corporate culture is strongly influenced by national culture, it is also influenced by other variables that allow it to develop on its own, distinguishing it from its national culture, which explains the wide range of corporate cultures contained within a single nation. Corporate culture is determined by national culture, but is also influenced by the beliefs and values of the founders and the organization's operating environment, such as industry (Baba et al., 1996; Ott, 1989).

The very fact that corporate culture develops in so many directions attests to the adaptability of American workers. Corporate culture is not an exact replica of American culture, and yet millions of people go to work every day and function effectively within these wide-ranging cultural realities. Further, very few people stay with the same company for the length of their careers, which indicates the ability of a single worker to adapt to many cultures. In the current context, this means that: 1) American workers can

work in multiple cultural environments, and 2) a team-based organization's culture does not have to "match" American culture, as long as it does not profoundly conflict with it. Not all team-based organizations fail, which means there are corporate cultures that are suitable for American teams. Chapter Four will explore what such a culture may look like, but first, it is necessary to gain an understanding of corporate culture in general terms.

In order to comprehend the microenvironment in which Americans work, corporate culture's components must be assessed to learn how they differ from and/or resemble those of national culture. Many researchers define corporate culture as a complex set of values, beliefs, assumptions, symbols, stories, rituals, practices, and thinking/behavioral styles that define and dictate the way an organization functions (Barney, 1986; Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Harris & Mossholder, 1996; Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998; Quick, 1992; Schwartz & Davis, 1981). Attention to individual behavior was included in Bloor and Dawson's (1994) definition of corporate culture:

a patterned system of perceptions, meaning, and beliefs about the organization which facilitates sense-making amongst a group of people sharing common experiences and guides individual behavior at work. This definition emphasizes the interplay of individual behavior with the sharedness of meanings and cognition at group level. (p. 275)

Hofstede et al. (1990) determined that corporate culture is historically determined, related to anthropological concepts, and socially constructed. This finding indicates that although they exist on different scales, national culture and corporate culture have some common ground. Harris and Mossholder (1996) named the following six indicators of an organization's culture: management style, the leader, climate, cohesiveness, definition of success, and dominant characteristics. Wilkins and Dyer (1988) added that it is "socially acquired and shared knowledge that is embodied in specific and general organizational frames of reference" (p. 523). Where corporate culture resides is another matter of debate. Hofstede (1998) maintained that an organization's culture is an attribute of the organization itself, not its members, although it is visible in the behaviors of the individual members. Other researchers argue that an organization is not its own independent entity separate from its members, but rather that the members make up the organization's cultural elements. Meglino and Ravlin (1998), for example, emphasized that organizations do not hold and support values apart from those held by their members, which is why they are so often referred to as "shared" or "congruent" values. The fact that employees generally self-select into an organization supports Meglino and Ravlin's argument.

Researchers agree that corporate culture is challenging to assess and difficult and slow to change (Clement, 1994; Hofstede et al., 1990; Juechter et al., 1998; Langan-Fox & Tan, 1997; Schwartz & Davis, 1981). Mohrman et al. (1995) elaborated,

Changing the culture is a painful and frustrating endeavor, partially because the beliefs and values of the old culture have become part of the self-concept of

organizational members. Perhaps the main reason that culture change is difficult, however, is that culture cannot be operated on directly. (p. 325)

The consensus among scholars that changing culture is a daunting, if not impossible, task serves as a warning to organizational leaders who may believe that they can simply change their company's culture to better accommodate teams. There is no sense in struggling to force a square peg into a round hole at the expense of the company, which is why teams are not the best strategy for all organizations in all situations.

Dimensions

Hofstede (1998) contended that the core of organizational culture is found in its practices. He conducted a study that revealed six dimensions of those practices that distinguish one corporate culture from another; they are: process vs. results orientations, employee vs. job orientations, parochial vs. professional, open system vs. closed system, loose vs. tight control, and normative vs. pragmatic. Process and results orientations refer to the difference between focusing on means and focusing on ends. Employee and job orientations refer to the emphasis on employees and their personal needs as opposed to emphasizing getting the job done. The parochial and professional orientations refer to the work identity stemming from one's company as opposed to one's profession. An open system is one in which outsiders and newcomers are welcome, whereas a closed system is one that is very secretive and thus only certain people represent a good "fit with the organization. Loose organizations are fairly causal, and tight organizations are more

formal and structured. Pragmatic and normative orientations refer to the influence of the market as opposed to the implementation of rules; the market drives pragmatic organizations, whereas in normative organizations the emphasis is on procedures and ethical standards.

Given these dimensions, an ideal team culture would be process-oriented (because that is where the major changes are taking place), have a balance between employee and job orientations (because the employees are likely to resist as their jobs undergo substantial change), parochial-oriented (to keep morale up and remind employees that the awkward changes being made for the sake of the company are valuable), have an open system (to encourage trust and flow of information and support), be loose (to prevent rigid traditional structures and rules from dominating the change efforts), and have a normative approach at first (to keep an inward focus and not become distracted by the fast-moving market).

Related to Hofstede's (1998) parochial/professional dichotomy is Bloor and Dawson's (1994) explanation of the process of professionalization by which certain occupations achieve the status of professions. This new status often prompts a shift in employees, moving them from a parochial to a professional mindset. The process begins with the formation and development of a professional association, after which members begin to gain control over their areas of expertise. Next, minimum standards of training in the relevant knowledge area are formulated (often followed by the establishment of a training facility.) Next comes the development of a professional knowledge base, a code of ethics, and a political presence to gain public support and recognition for status as

professionals. While the new status does not inherently threaten teams, it does represent segmentation and reflects the hierarchical mindset of elitism. Additionally, professionals often feel more bonded with members of their professional organizations, with whom they have much readily in common, than with fellow team members who represent a wide range of experiences, skills, and knowledge bases.

Harris and Mossholder (1996) defined four dimensions of corporate culture that differ from those arrived at by Hofstede (1998). These four dimensions are not presented in terms of opposite orientations, but instead describe general fields present in any organization that can be used to evaluate specific cultural environments. They are the group dimension, the hierarchical dimension, the developmental dimension, and the rational dimension. The group dimension refers to the concern for people, which includes development of trust, human resources functions, morale, and collaborative decision-making. The hierarchical dimension refers to bureaucracy, which provides stability, centralization, coordination and role definition, efficiency, and compliance. The developmental dimension refers to the place of change in an organization, such as in innovation, risk-taking, growth, and creativity. The rational dimension refers to the organization's competitiveness, decisiveness, achievement, and attainment of goals. When an organization is transitioning to teams, emphasis should be on the group dimension, which fosters trust, morale, and collaboration, and the developmental dimension, which taps into the organization's capacity for innovation, change, and growth.

Components of Corporate Culture

As explained previously, many researchers describe culture in terms of components, often focusing on how these parts combine to make a whole. By dissecting an organization's culture, decision-makers approach a better understanding of whether or not teams are viable in their specific context. The degree of collaboration, the fundamental values, and the general character of the organization are all made more clear by evaluating individual cultural components and then considering how much weight each carries. Pettigrew (1979) wrote that symbol, language, ideology, belief, ritual, and myth are the products of culture, and that symbol is the most inclusive because it encompasses forms of language, ritual, and myth. Therefore, by studying organizational symbols, a great deal can be learned about that particular corporate culture. Adding that symbols have anthropological roots (as Hofstede [1990, 1998] would no doubt agree), Pettigrew wrote, "Symbol construction serves as a vehicle for the group and organizational conception" (p. 574). Commenting on specific symbols and their impact on a collaborative team-based environment, Mohrman et al. (1995) wrote,

Symbols that differentiate among employees, such as size of office, assigned parking places, and executive dining rooms, send a message that the work and decisions of those at the top are most central to the organization's success. Even less obvious symbols communicate corporate culture: companies that have employee numbers on badges, for example, may be unwittingly both celebrating loyalty and sending a message that seniority carries with it a special influence. . . .

Such symbols work against the creation of a culture where people of mixed level and seniority can come together in a team and make decisions based on expertise. (p. 326)

Peters and Waterman (1982) identified values as the core of an organization's culture. Other scholars join them in their emphasis on values in organizations. Pant and Lachman (1998) found that

values inform individual and group behavior by providing the criteria according to which social actors choose both their ends and the means by which they prefer to achieve them. . . . The power of values to guide preferred means and ends comes from their ability to act as powerful agents of social control. Value systems further legitimize behavior by stipulating positive or negative sanctions for desired and proscribed behavior within a given cultural setting. . . . In organizations, values legitimize the organization's' existence--its modes of organizing and functioning, including patterns of business conduct and practices--within the larger social context. (p. 196)

Taking a different view, Hofstede et al. (1990, 1998) found that organizational cultures are distinguishable from each other primarily by their practices. Hofstede et al. (1990) directly addressed the difference between their findings and those of Peters and Waterman by explaining that practices encompass the behavior of the leaders as well as the employees, whereas most discussions of organizational values refer only to the company's founders and/or leaders. Hofstede (1998) observed that membership in an

organization requires following the practices, but does not necessarily require embracing the organization's values. Hofstede et al. (1990, 1998) added that the two viewpoints (their own and that of Peters and Waterman) are related, however, in that the values of founders and leaders become the practices of the individual organizational members.

Corporate Roles

The first organizational roles to be taken up are the roles of founders. The founders continue to be important even after the organization reaches maturity, as they provide leadership and cultural integration (Quick, 1992). Founders create the original vision for their organizations' cultures, and over time, the values embedded in the culture by the founders become part of the corporate culture and identity (Hofstede, 1998; Hofstede et al., 1990; Ott, 1989; Quick, 1992).

An organization is a social microcosm that contains many of the same roles as are present in non-working environments. The unofficial hierarchy among American workers provides a network through which a great deal of communication takes place. Deal and Kennedy (1982) refer to the spies, story-tellers, priests, whisperers, and gossips in an organization, adding that this intricate network, which they name "the cultural network," is "the primary means of communication within an organization; it ties together all parts of the company without respect to positions or titles. The network is important because it not only transmits information, but also interprets the significance of the information for employees" (p. 85).

The storytellers interpret the events of an organization and explain them to other organizational members. Deal & Kennedy (1982) wrote that the storytellers' tales, "like myths in a tribal setting, explain and give meaning to the workaday world. For the corporation, storytellers maintain cohesion and provide guidelines for everyone to follow. It's the most powerful way to convey information and shape behavior" (p. 87).

Storytellers also keep legends about the company's heroes alive as well as explaining what is required to make it or get ahead in the organization. Priests are the corporate worriers, maintaining the ethical code and providing a sympathetic ear to troubled co-workers. Deal & Kennedy deemed the role of the priest as the one requiring the most responsibility of all the roles. The whisperers' power comes not from position or title, but from the fact that they have the ear of the person in charge. They are able to read the boss's mind and generate their own extensive networks of contacts. Gossips possess vast amounts of information about the organization and its members. They usually know what is happening at any given moment, as they possess the most current information, and are able to spread news quickly. By embellishing the stories of the heroes, they aid in the process of hero-making. Spies informally work for senior managers. They are generally well liked and perceived as non-threatening, which gives them access to inside information.

Corporate roles are filled in virtually any organization, regardless of corporate personality, structure, or culture. In a transitional period, the employees assuming the various roles may change, but the existence of the roles does not; this provides continuity.

Strong Corporate Cultures

In the literature on organizational culture, there is considerable discussion of what makes a culture strong. A strong culture, after all, can be a source of competitive advantage and ongoing financial performance (Barney, 1986). Peters & Waterman (1982) agreed, finding that “top-performing” institutions have “rich networks of legends and parables of all sorts” (p. 104) and that employees in stronger cultures enjoy a higher level of autonomy. Barney’s research revealed that there are three qualities that are present in cultures that are strong enough to offer an organization such advantages--the culture must be valuable (it supports and encourages behaviors and practices that bring about high sales, low costs, profits, etc.), it must be rare (it is so unique that it possesses attributes not commonly found in other organizations), and it must not be perfectly imitable (if other organizations attempt to recreate this culture, they will be unable to do so, and thus put themselves at a disadvantage). Juechter et al. (1998) named strategic focus, clear view of reality, commitment, and aligned behavior as components of a high-performing culture.

Strong cultures exist in companies in which there is a consensus among its members of what the culture is and is not; this can also be referred to as the intensity or pervasiveness of a culture (Langan-Fox & Tan, 1997). The stronger a culture, the more difficult it is to change and the less adaptable it is to change because it is very cohesive and influential (Hofstede, 1998).

Culture plays an important role in disruptive times of challenge and transition for an organization in that it provides continuity, security, and adaptability. Quick (1992) explained that culture holds an organization's people together so that they can handle environmental changes. When planning an organizational change, consideration of organizational culture is crucial because it is not only the foundation of many of the company's assets (such as financial performance, employee satisfaction, and cooperation; Langan-Fox & Tan, 1997), but the proposed changes may be in direct conflict with the existing culture. The consequences of this conflict are not often evaluated, and can result in decreased productivity and vague strategies (Langan-Fox & Tan). It is therefore wise to take culture into account and if a potential conflict exists, prepare for it.

Culture vs. Climate

The difficulty of enacting changes in culture has been established, but climate is more susceptible to change and may represent an opportunity to make the workplace feel supportive of change or, specifically, teams. Culture is distinguishable from climate, although the distinctions are subject to debate. Hofstede (1998) explained that culture is based in anthropology and resides at the broad organizational level. Climate, on the other hand, is described as having sociological roots, residing at the individual level, and is best understood as a subset of culture. Denison (1996) found that there are broad areas of agreement on the distinctions between culture and climate:

Culture refers to the deep structure of organizations, which is rooted in the values, beliefs, and assumptions held by organizational members. . . . Interaction reproduces a symbolic world that gives culture both a great stability and a certain precarious and fragile nature rooted in the dependence of the system on individual cognition and action. Climate, in contrast, portrays organizational environments as being rooted in the organization's value system, but tends to present these social environments on relatively static terms, describing them in terms of a fixed (and broadly applicable) set of dimensions. Thus climate is often considered relatively temporary, subject to direct control, and largely limited to those aspects of the social environments that are consciously perceived by organizational members. (p. 624)

Defining climate has been a source of disagreement among scholars, as some contend that it is best understood as a set of shared perceptions, whereas others regard climate as merely a set of shared working conditions. Falling into the former category, Cooke & Rousseau (1988) described climate as a reflection of "the perceptions of organizational structures and how it feels to be a member of the organization" (p. 251). Similarly, Schwartz and Davis (1981) defined climate as "a measure of whether people's expectations about what it should be like to work in an organization are being met" (p. 33).

In summary, corporate culture is the immediate environment in which American employees operate in the workplace. As products of national culture, corporate cultures

are certainly influenced by their macroenvironment, but their influence by other factors renders each one unique. Researchers disagree on what elements distinguish one corporate culture from another, but for the purposes of the current study, acceptance of values and practices as the answer is adequate. With reference to strong culture, decision-makers may find themselves with a dilemma. On one hand, a strong corporate culture supports organizational goals and provides stability and competitive advantage, but on the other hand, a strong culture is less flexible and supportive of change.

By virtue of the fact that teams manage to thrive in some organizations, it can be concluded that there are corporate cultures that are conducive to teaming. Chapter Four will describe a conducive team culture from two perspectives--what qualities the culture possesses, and what the culture encourages.

CHAPTER 4

MODEL OF A COLLABORATIVE CULTURE IN A TEAM-BASED ORGANIZATION

Despite what may appear to be an impasse between American culture and work teams, and despite the harsh divisions drawn by proponents of the individualism/collectivism dichotomy, the fact remains that there are self-directed work teams in American businesses that provide substantial benefits to their organizations. Thus, the two are not mutually exclusive. This chapter proposes a model of a collaborative workplace, including the values (per Peters and Waterman, 1982) and practices (per Mohrman et al., 1995) that make up that culture. While the values offer a firm foundation for the collaborative workplace and, as Hofstede et al. (1990, 1998) suggested, bring about suitable work habits, it is the practices themselves that directly correlate with characteristics of American culture. Table 4.2 demonstrates how specific practices described in this chapter either neutralize or satisfy the characteristics of American culture that often challenge teams; the typical stumbling blocks of teams discussed in Chapter Two are cross-referenced with the relevant aspects of the model to demonstrate that while there are predictable challenges to adopting teams, they can be overcome with a collaborative culture that does not deny the precepts of American culture.

Collaboration is the principle that allows American employees, programmed by years of living in American culture, to work as highly effective team members.

Understanding the team environment as a collaborative workplace breaks away from the black-and-white way of thinking about teams that requires employees to function in a way directly contrary to their cultural learning. Marshall (1995) deemed collaboration “the premier candidate to replace hierarchy as the organizing principle for leading and managing the twenty-first century workplace” (p. 15). He added that the following are five components of such a workplace: a collaborative culture, collaborative leadership, strategic vision, collaborative team processes, and a collaborative structure. The model set forth in this chapter contains all of these elements, along with more detailed manifestations of these five components.

Table 4-1 demonstrates the specific ways in which the model described in this chapter addresses each of Marshall’s components of a collaborative workplace. A collaborative culture is flexible and supportive of the transition to a team structure; this includes recognizing that teams require time to evolve before they can be expected to fully meet their potential as vital contributors to the organization. Collaborative leadership is characterized by buy-in on the part of management and. Leaders supporting collaboration may put in place an evolving pay scale reflecting the gradual maturation of teams. Strategic vision includes adequate preparation for and education about teams, congruence between organizational values and the decisions made about how the company will conduct its business in the short and long-term, and again, the recognition that teams require an appropriate length of time to develop. Collaborative team processes

are supported by clearly defining new roles for members, managers, executives, and facilitators. As teams evolve, so do their processes and degrees of interdependence; by acknowledging that interdependence comes about gradually, leaders are less likely to disrupt teams by expecting or demanding too much interdependence too soon. The changing organizational structure supports collaboration when it accepts appropriate hierarchical remnants rather than attempting to eradicate it completely in favor of an absolute team base; in some cases, this means accepting that there are valuable employees whose best work is done alone. In the midst of a changing structure, leaders can exhibit their commitment to collaboration by making changes visible to employees.

Table 4.1

Components of Marshall's Collaborative Workplace Addressed by Model

Component of Collaborative Workplace	Relevant Aspect of Model
Collaborative culture	→ Culture that supports change
	→ Allow time to evolve
Collaborative leadership	→ Leadership buy-in
	→ Evolving reward & compensation system
Strategic vision	→ Culture that is prepared
	→ Value congruence
	→ Allow time to evolve
Collaborative team processes	→ Clearly-defined new roles
	→ Evolving interdependence

Table 4.1 (continued)

Collaborative structure	—————▶	Accept hierarchical remnants
	—————▶	Accept non-team employees
	—————▶	Make changes visible

It should be noted that there are certain aspects of American culture that actually work in favor of work teams. Caudron (1994) commented on the American tradition of teamwork, as seen in athletic teams, the military, and rescue groups. As previously related, the United States rates low on Hofstede's (1983) power distance scale, which means that American workers are already predispositioned against blindly following the organizational leader. They are also less formal and more comfortable in relationships with their superiors. Consequently, management approaches and business strategies that involve granting higher degrees of autonomy and responsibility are more successful in cultures with low power distance (Hofstede, 1983). Kirkman and Shapiro (1997) described the "doing" orientation and belief in free will typical of Americans, both of which refer to their acceptance of responsibility for their actions and their inclination to work hard toward goals and achievements, making them more receptive to self-management than members of "being"-oriented cultures. The authors offer an illustration of the difference in the two orientations by citing an example of pay raises given in Mexico and Malaysia (being-oriented cultures) and similar raises given in the United States (doing-oriented culture). In the being-oriented cultures, employees responded to the pay raise by working less, reasoning that they could now make the same amount of

money but spend more time with family and friends. Americans, however, responded by working harder, reasoning that they could make more money with the raise, as it increased their earning potential.

Values of a collaborative workplace

Support and commitment

Before an organization commits to undergoing a transformation such as implementing the use of teams, it is the responsibility of the decision-makers to be certain that the corporate culture is one that can support that kind of change. The culture should be one that is flexible, adaptable, open to innovation, and able to maintain an appropriate degree of stability. Wilkins (1983) found that corporate culture becomes apparent when employees' roles are changed, when subcultures clash, and when top management carries out major decision about the company's direction. All three of these are relevant to transitioning to teams, so it is a mistake for decision-makers to disregard cultural implications (Clement, 1994; Juechter et al., 1998). Chen et al. (1998) added that cultural elements have the ability to moderate external factors, including organizational structure. Juechter et al. commented, "We are finding that culture defines, supports, and sets the boundaries of an organization's ability to function. All the change in the world won't provide sustainable performance unless an organization's culture and people are fully

prepared and aligned to support that change” (p. 64). Shelton (1995) emphasized the importance of culture in the decisions surrounding the use of teams:

The decision to restructure to a team-based organization is a major change. Like all other major changes it requires a lot of forethought and planning. Teams cannot be successful in isolation. They must be one piece of an integrated vision. A supportive, caring culture should be in place before the team structure is implemented. Without the right environment teams will wither and die regardless of the sponsor’s good intentions. (p. 9)

Kirkman and Shapiro (1997) echoed this sentiment in their argument that the success of teams is largely determined by the organization’s ability to plan for and manage culture-based resistance to teams.

Leadership buy-in and value congruence

The importance of thorough planning for team implementation cannot be overstated. The planning process raises questions about the suitability of teams for a particular organization, gives the leaders an opportunity to evaluate the corporate culture with reference to the new structure, and both demonstrates and tests the leaders’ commitment to work teams. Further, leaders have an opportunity to explore how their roles will change in the new environment, where authority will not automatically come from hierarchical ranking (Mohrman et al., 1995). A culture that supports the new team-based approach is one in which the organization’s decision-makers and top management believe in the advantages of the new system (Clement, 1994; Ettorre, 1995; Juechter et

al., 1998). As previously discussed, significant problems arise when management (from top to front-line) is resistant to change efforts. Bergmann & De Meuse (1996) emphasized this point when they observed, “Senior management cannot simply pronounce its workforce empowered. . . . Employees look at the actions of management to determine if top management truly means what it says” (p. 44).

Recall that Hofstede (1990, 1998) claimed that the practices reflect the founders’/leaders’ values, and Peters and Waterman (1982) contended that the values themselves represent the core of a corporate culture. Either way, if the organization’s leaders do not stand behind the team structure, then it is incongruent with their values, and has little hope of flourishing. Marshall (1995) pointed to this as a major reason why many team efforts fail. Similarly, Pant & Lachman (1998) argued that strong organizational values cultivate strategic change that is for the good of the company, whereas strategies that are incongruent with the values of the key stakeholders will not be embraced.

Practices of a collaborative workplace

Accept hierarchical remnants

A team-based organization “requires a new mindset about who we are and what we do at work,” wrote Mohrman et al. (1995), “Most people have internalized the old hierarchical logic, in which their organizational position determined what they did, who

they related to, and how they were treated.” Because American employees have come to understand work in the context of a hierarchy, it is advisable to accept and embrace structural elements that resemble hierarchies or operate on the logic of a hierarchy. These elements provide a sense of familiarity and comfort for employees, which enables them to feel less like they are working in a completely foreign environment in which they are uneasy or, worse, incompetent. Recall the description of the organization’s “hidden hierarchy” described by Deal & Kennedy (1982). Even in a team-based organization, there will be spies, priests, and other corporate roles to be filled. These types of vestiges of the traditional work structure provide much-needed continuity for employees, without obstructing the new way of doing work. In fact, managers can use informal networks to the advantage of the transition and assure employees that the strategy is actually going to happen and that it is well planned. Managers can also find out through these networks what the sentiment is among the workers, and what their concerns are.

A formal balance of hierarchies and teams can be reached by creating a hierarchy of teams (Dumaine, 1994). In a transitional period, the organization will undergo structural change and it is the responsibility of top management to gather all the information necessary to create a new organizational chart. By strategically aligning teams with each other in a manner that supports organizational processes, teams are better able to perform their functions and team members are able to see the actual changes taking place in their workplace. Whereas in the hierarchical structure, competition takes place between co-workers, in a team structure, management can expect a level of

competition between teams, which is not necessarily a concern. The competitive drive is a motivator to Americans and often brings about better or faster results.

Finally, organizational decision-makers should realize and accept the fact that not every employee is well-suited for team membership. Even in a high-performing team-based organization, there will no doubt be employees whose contributions to the company are best yielded by working alone. Placing every employee in a team, or terminating those who do not ultimately work well in a team, is not necessary to honor the team-based structure, and the organization is better served by acknowledging the value of individuals contributors (Gordon, 1994). In doing so, the organization maintains flexibility and is able to benefit by having a place for any employee whose skill set is valuable to the organization.

Make changes visible

Hofstede (1990, 1998) explained that practices, which reflect the core of an organization's culture, are subject to change. Control over many of the organization's practices should be taken seriously in the planning stages of team implementation, as the implementation of cooperation-encouraging mechanisms can be very effective (Chen et al., 1998). In a period of dramatic change, such as transitioning to the use of work teams, it is important that employees witness and experience the changing practices. While there are many changes going on at such a time, many are "behind the scenes." These have little or no meaning to employees, but when they begin to see actual changes being

implemented and becoming part of the way the organization functions, the transition has meaning to them. Employees then have a context in which to understand, visualize, and adapt to the new structure, and they are willing to commit to the necessary training required for them to do their jobs (Bergmann & De Meuse, 1996) .

Clearly define new roles

Besides adapting to their new roles as team members, employees must learn to negotiate the changed work environment, flow of work, and relation of each organizational piece to the others. There is a great deal of confusion during a transitional period, especially in one that fundamentally challenges the employees' expectations of a work environment and their roles in it. By providing clear direction and parameters of new roles, responsibilities, and ways of getting things done, employees are more apt to feel that they have some context in which to operate on a day-to-day basis and that they are competent to handle the many changes in the workplace. Whereas in a hierarchy, an employee's position defined his/her role and responsibilities, in a team-based organization, Mohrman et al. (1995) noted, "Doing one's job means working with others across functions and across systemic levels and being able to make trade-offs that consider the divergent perspectives at all levels. . . . Dealing with ambiguity, uncertainty, and continual change is not an exception but is a routine part of one's job; there is no steady state" (p. 356).

Allow time for teams to evolve

Despite the American tendency toward impatience, it is critical that teams be given ample time to evolve (Caudron, 1994; Clement, 1994; Ettorre, 1995; Kirkman & Shapiro, 1997; Marshall, 1995). They will not be immediately effective, nor will the simple creation of a group identity be motivation enough to induce cooperation (Chen et al., 1998), so the planning process must take into account a period of time in which team members learn to function as a team, build trust, and strengthen interpersonal skills. Developing trust is not immediate in American working relationships, especially given that American workers base trust on role performance and accomplishments (Chen et al., 1998), all of which takes time. Teams are known to go through four stages before they are able to function effectively (Caudron, 1994): forming (teams are created, tasks and goals are defined), storming (the initial enthusiasm is replaced by frustration, team members struggle with each other), norming (the team strikes a balance, establishes norms and routines), and performing (the team gains confidence and is able to work constructively, trust is established). Completion of this four-part process is not guaranteed; the team can go awry at any point because each phase carries with it a set of challenges. For this reason, rushing teams or expecting too much too early is detrimental to the teams and to the organization as a whole.

One way to manage team growth is by gradually increasing levels of interdependence, beginning with outcome interdependence and moving toward task interdependence. Outcome interdependence refers to the degree to which team members

perceive that the attainment of their goals relies on the contributions of the other members of the team. In a transitional period, the organization should implement positive outcome interdependence strategies. Positive outcome interdependence occurs when a team member feels that he or she benefits from the goal achievement of the other members of the team. An example would be collective rewards contingent on individual accomplishments. Employees working with positive task interdependence tend to be more open to each others' ideas, input, and needs and are more supportive of compromise. On the other hand, negative outcome interdependence occurs when a team member perceives the success of other team members as hindering his or her own achievement. An example of this would be any type of individual commendation or ranking system within the team.

Task interdependence is the interconnected nature of team members' responsibilities that is commonly understood as division of labor within a team. Another way of looking at task interdependence is by viewing the flow of work, where the completion or quality of work by one team member directly affects the task of the team member whose work follows.

In the midst of the uncertainty surrounding the implementation of teams and employees' assignments to teams, workers may be confused about how they will accomplish their tasks, but they are certain that they want to achieve their desired outcomes by meeting the goals set for them. Allowing a lesser degree of task interdependence at the beginning allows employees to stay somewhat in a comfort zone, while the team begins the crucial process of building trust and establishing team

processes. At the same time, outcome interdependence requires the team to start thinking of each other as team members who are responsible for each other. Wageman (1995) observed that high outcome interdependence may encourage effort, while high task interdependence may encourage cooperation. Commenting on the evolution toward task interdependence, Kirkman and Shapiro (1997) wrote that

the use of teams in the workplace . . . may best be thought of as lying on a continuum. At one end, teams with a low degree of interdependence consist of employees who rarely see each other and perform their tasks without exchanging information or materials. At the other end of the continuum, teams with a high degree of task interdependence consist of employees who frequently interact and constantly exchange materials and information to complete their tasks. On a highly interdependent team, successful task accomplishment obviously depends greatly on the interaction of employees. (p. 739)

The issue of reward systems and compensation is also best approached as an evolutionary process. Dumaine (1994) explained how many successful team-based organizations handle this delicate problem:

When it comes to paying teams, most managers still throw up their hand-held computers in despair. Pay the team as a group? Then won't your star performers feel slighted? Pay for individual performance? What does that do to encourage teamwork? Companies that use teams best generally still pay members individually, but with a significant difference: They make teamwork--a sharing

attitude, the ability to deal well with others--a key issue in an individual's annual performance review. (p. 87)

As a team member, an employee is no longer responsible for performance only at the individual level. A team member is responsible for his/her own performance and the team's performance, which should be concerned with their business unit's performance (Mohrman et al., 1995). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect rewards and compensation to reflect contributions and performance on various levels. While it is neither fair nor efficient to tie individual pay to the performance of an entire business unit, consisting of teams with which the employee works, but of which he/she is not a member, it is a good idea to base compensation on individual and team performance (Dumaine, 1994; Wageman, 1995).

Recalling the information regarding American culture and its fostering of individual achievement along with the likelihood of social loafing, this proposal suggests an evolutionary pay scale that takes into account individual and team performance. Organizations can divide compensation into an individually-determined percentage and a team-determined percentage, which represents the employee's work priorities. The ration of these percentages can then be adjusted (increasing the team-determined portion) to more accurately reflect the team's development. In the early stages of teaming, resistance is predictable, and so encouraging trust, teamwork, and collaboration is essential. By tying part of an employee's pay to team performance, the employee is persuaded to learn to work as a member of a team and to pursue team goals. At the same time, the employee is comfortable knowing that his/her individual effort will also be recognized and

rewarded, thus enhancing the employee's feelings of control over the situation (Chen et al., 1998). To foster team processes and decision-making, commitment to the team should be factored into the individually-determined portion of compensation. In future years, as teams change in their membership, the division will not be the same for everyone, but those with the most team experience will have more to gain by assuming a leadership role within the team.

Table 4.2

Practices of Collaborative Workplace as Related to Characteristics of American Culture

Practice of the Collaborative Workplace	Characteristic of American culture it neutralizes or satisfies
Accept hierarchical remnants, including	→ Work habits
Inter-team competition	→ Self-interest
Make changes visible	→ Self-interest → Impatience
Clearly define new roles	→ Work habits → Interpersonal skills → Social loafing → Empowerment/autonomy

Table 4.2 (continued)

Allow time for teams to evolve, including	—————▶	Self-interest
	—————▶	Impatience
	—————▶	Interpersonal skills
	—————▶	Individual interests and rewards
Evolving pay scale	—————▶	Social loafing
	—————▶	Individual rewards

Conclusion and areas of future research

American organizations face barriers to forming effective team-based structures because American culture does not naturally support team functioning and cooperation. However, for many companies facing the challenges of competing in the modern market, new strategies are their only hope of staying afloat. When they work, teams offer innovation, maximizing of the workers' skills and abilities, and many other measurable advantages. Beyond that, effective team-based organizations offer qualitative benefits such as an enjoyable work environment and enhanced camaraderie. Still, teams do not survive in all organizations and the current study has shown how many of the common team problems have their roots in cultural issues.

Does this mean that teams should be rejected out of hand by American organizations? The answer is no, because corporate culture is able to mediate some of the

qualities of American culture that are so destructive to teams. In other words, American culture accounts for some of the stumbling blocks that team encounter, but corporate culture has the potential to address them and provide alternative ways of understanding the environment. There are cultures that provide an optimal working environment for teams, while others possess the potential to become conducive team environments.

America is full of diversity, which is reflected in certain corporations and employees. The very diversity of the United States is a limiting factor in studies such as this one because American culture is not a static entity but a dynamic one that maintains certain consistencies with the passage of time, but also evolves and adapts with changes in the country's population, history, leadership, and a host of other cultural variables. Perhaps aspects of American culture that are in conflict with innovative business designs such as teams will eventually be nonexistent and perhaps the changing face of American culture will usher in new challenges. Even more dynamic is corporate culture, which encompasses a seemingly endless spectrum of manifestations. As technology continuously speeds the pace of business, presenting new challenges at an ever-rising rate, the term "corporate culture" takes on added dimensions of complexity.

This study has proposed a model of a collaborative workplace in which teams, to whatever degree would be able to work and grow. Future areas of research would test this model against established team-based organizations to see how similar their values and practices align with the model. Comparing the model with failed team efforts would also be useful to determine if there is an opposite of this model. A very valuable long-term study would test the model as a predictive tool for the success of fledgling team-

based structures. For a global view, comparing the model with a model of a team culture in a collectivist culture would be a valuable addition to the individualist/collectivist body of literature. While this study alluded to a relationship between American culture and corporate culture, a deeper investigation of this relationship would represent a valuable addition to the literature regarding culture. A study exploring the place of socialization in business settings, particularly in bringing new members into an unorthodox organizational structure, might explain why some employees are attracted to a new way of working while others are not; this study would be especially valuable if coupled with research on personality “fit” in the workplace. The current study presents a fairly general view of a variety of elements, any of which would be a good starting point for in-depth research.

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